

**Remarks**

Claims 1- 28 are presented for examination.

New Claim 28 as been added to present the limitations of objected to Claim 11 rewritten in independent form, as suggested by the examiner, including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 1-10, 12 and 8-27 stand finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over *Church* in view of *Feisthamel*. This rejection is respectfully traversed. The propriety of a final rejection at this point in the prosecution of the application is also respectfully traversed.

Entry of a final rejection of this application is respectfully submitted as being premature. Applicants' Claim 9 currently presented in its original, unamended form. The Claim has been only once rejected (under 35 U.S.C. 102 based on the teachings of *Feisthamel*). Even though the claim has not been amended, the second rejection of Claim 9 has been made final in the present application based upon new grounds of rejection, specifically the teachings of *Church* in view of *Feisthamel*. Applicants' Claim 9 has not been twice rejected on the same grounds, and accordingly, a final rejection of the claim is premature.

It is respectfully submitted that applicants' Claim 1 calls for an annular seal member carried in a groove within the free box end. The external seal of the proposed combination of *Church* and *Feisthamel* shows a resilient seal member carried by the box, with only a single box shoulder adjacent one side of the resilient seal member. It is respectfully submitted that there is no groove in the box for the external seal of the *Feisthamel* or the *Church* references.

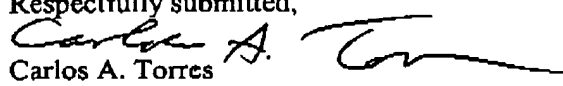
Accordingly, Claim 1, and Claims 2-5 dependent therefrom, distinguish over the cited art and allowance of such claims is respectfully solicited.

Claim 8 similarly calls for the external seal to be an annular elastomeric seal ring carried in an annular groove formed in the first tubular body. Claim 9 calls for the external seal to be an annular elastomeric seal ring carried in an annular groove formed in the second tubular body. Claim 20 calls for the external seal to be an annular, elastomeric seal member received within a groove formed in one of the external seal components. Claim 21 calls for the annular groove to be formed in the box seal component. Claim 22 calls for the external seal to be an annular elastomeric seal member received within an annular groove formed in the pin seal component. It is respectfully submitted that the proposed combination of *Church* and *Feisthamel* does not teach these constructions for the reasons previously advanced.

It is respectfully submitted that the proposed combination of *Church* and *Feisthamel* is not suggested by either reference and, if made, would render the respective teachings of each inoperative or unsuitable for their intended purpose.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that applicants' claims patentably distinguish over the cited art and allowance of such claims is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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I hereby certify that this correspondence and all referenced enclosures are being deposited by me with the United States Postal Service, first-class mail and via facsimile addressed to Examiner Carlos Lugo, Commissioner of Patents, Mail Stop: P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 on this the 9th day of February, 2004.

By:

  
Martha Jeffers